

GUIDELINES FOR EMPIRICAL MASTER THESES

General information

In the master thesis you work independently on a relevant question of Labour Economics or a related field. The master thesis contains the following main components:

- Discussion of the relevant economic theories
- Derivation of hypotheses based on predictions from the theory
- Summary and critical evaluation of the previous empirical literature
- Empirical test of the hypotheses
- Critical evaluation of your own analysis.

Structure and contents of the master thesis

1. Introduction

In the introduction you formulate the concrete question that should be answered with the master thesis. In case your thesis focuses on a specific aspect within this question, you explain and motivate this focus. Furthermore, you explain the motivation for and relevance of the question. Also, you define and explain important terms and definitions. At the end of the introduction, you briefly explain the structure of the remainder of the master thesis.

2. Theoretical foundations

In this chapter you explain and discuss relevant economic or related theories. What does theory say concerning your question? How does theory define relevant terms? Which predictions do the relevant theories make concerning the behaviour of the involved agents? Which relationships are expected from the point of view of the theory? In short, what predictions does theory make regarding the empirical relationships you are interested in?

In this part, it is crucial to not only discuss the theories in general, but also to apply them to your specific question. The quality of this part will depend on how well you succeed in connecting the discussed theories to your specific research question.

At the end of this chapter, you derive precise hypotheses, which have to be verified empirically. These hypotheses should refer specifically to the question you are addressing in your thesis.

3. Existing empirical literature

In this chapter, you give an overview about the previous empirical literature and summarize the most important conclusions. It is not the aim to discuss every individual study in detail. Rather, the point is to structure the previous literature, to extract the most important conclusions, to examine the literature critically and to work out open questions. Discuss, for example, similar studies as a block; e.g. summarize studies which are using the same methodical approach, refer to the same country or show similar results. Nevertheless, it is important to cite each study correctly. Describe the most important results for each block of studies, discuss the used methodology critically and work out

open methodological or substantive questions. Elaborate on important differences between various blocks of studies.

It is not sufficient to discuss some studies out of large literature. The literature review should reflect (all of) the knowledge from the previous literature. If you do decide to focus your discussion on a subset of existing studies this choice has to be justified convincingly at the beginning of the literature review.

At the end of this chapter, you explain the contribution of your thesis relative to the previous literature. What do you do differently than previous studies? What is new? Which open question(s) do you address? Which methodological differences do you make?

4. Empirical analysis

In this chapter you describe your own empirical analysis and your results. It should contain the following parts:

a) Data

Describe briefly which data you use and the relevant variables, in particular the variables you have constructed yourself. Focus on what is relevant for your specific question.

b) Used sample

Describe the sample you use. Explain which observations you use and why you possibly exclude observations. Document how the sample size changes by every selection step in comparison to the raw data and how large the final sample used is. Discuss in this context, if and possibly how your sample selection could affect the representativeness, validity and interpretation of your results.

c) Descriptive analysis

Present, explain, and discuss relevant descriptive statistics. These statistics have two purposes. On the one hand, a first view on the data regarding the hypotheses derived from the theory should be given. Are there indications for or against the validity of the hypotheses? On the other hand, the problem of selection - or respectively - endogeneity should be illustrated. For example, if you examine the influence of variable V on variable Y, it should be shown via descriptive statistics, how people with different values of variable V differ concerning their characteristics. This allows a better understanding regarding systematic differences and important control variables for the econometric analysis.

d) Methodological approach

In this part you explain your methodological approach and the estimation strategy. At the minimum, regression analyses (OLS/Probit/Logit depending on the type of the dependent variable) with standard errors are expected. When Probit- or Logit-models are used, it is expected that the marginal effects are shown and interpreted. More advanced methods affect the grade positively, but are not necessary for a good grade. Explain the selection of your dependent and explanatory variables. Proper reasoning for every single control variable is of great importance. Discuss why or under which conditions the selected estimation method is suitable to answer the question of the master thesis and in particular to test the validity of the derived hypotheses. Self-critically discuss possible problems or limitations of the analysis that cannot be solved with the available data. In particular, discuss the assumptions which are required for your selected method and their validity in your specific application and data.

e) Results

Document, describe, discuss and interpret the results of your analyses. Discuss in detail whether the hypotheses you derived are confirmed or not by your findings. If your results contradict theory, discuss possible explanations for your results.

5. Summary, critical evaluation and conclusions

In the last chapter, you summarize the results of your master thesis and put them into perspective. On the one hand, you critically reflect on possible problems and limitations. On the other hand, you compare your findings to existing results from the previous literature and discuss your contribution. Finally, you draw a conclusion: What can be learned from your study? Which implications follow from your results?

Format and length of the master thesis

Length: 35 - 50 pages (without appendices, table of contents, table of graphs, list of acronyms and reference list). Please integrate important graphs and tables into the main text. Detailed results can be added in the appendix. There are no formatting requirements.

Grading

The focus concerning the grading of the master thesis is on your empirical analysis. However, deficits in the theory or literature review part will result in substantial grade deductions because all students should be able to complete these parts adequately.

Data

Because of the limited time available for completing the thesis, we strongly advise against the collection of own data. There are numerous easily accessible and suitable datasets for a wide range of questions. Prof. Wunsch will assist you in finding suitable and readily available data and will provide support with data access. For example, the following data bases are suitable for master theses and easily accessible:

[Swiss Household Panel \(SHP\)](#)

[Swiss Labour Force Survey \(SAKE\)](#)

[Swiss Graduate Survey \(HSAB\)](#)

[Swiss Panel Study : Transitions From Primary Education to Adulthood \(TREE\)](#)

[German Socioeconomic Panel \(GSOEP\)](#)

Support during the writing of the thesis

During the process of writing your master thesis, Prof. Wunsch provides support and feedback by arrangement. In addition, students can contact the assistants of Prof. Wunsch if they have questions concerning the data and statistical software packages.

Topics previously supervised by Prof. Wunsch

- The Effect of Mental Health on Individual Labour Market Participation in Switzerland
- Was erklärt Einkommensunterschiede zwischen Müttern und Frauen ohne Kinder?
- Lohnunterschiede zwischen Schweizern und Nichtschweizern
- Wie wirkt sich die Wahl der Universität in der Schweiz auf den Erfolg am Arbeitsmarkt aus?
- Konvergenz von Ausländern und Schweizern auf dem Schweizer Arbeitsmarkt
- The Firm-Size Wage Premium in Switzerland: A Semiparametric Approach
- Einkommensunterschiede zwischen Müttern und kinderlosen Frauen in der Schweiz
- Mehrfachbeschäftigung in der Schweiz
- Lohnelastizität des Lehrerangebots in der Schweiz
- Lohnunterschiede zwischen Fachhochschul- und Universitätsabsolventen
- The economic returns of linguistic competences: Evidence for Switzerland
- Das Teilzeitlohndifferential in der Schweiz
- Wirkung von Fortbildungsmassnahmen für Arbeitslose in Deutschland
- Personalmanagement in Zeiten des demographischen Wandels
- Wirkungen arbeitsmarktlicher Massnahmen für Arbeitslose ab 50 Jahren
- Der Einfluss der Herkunft auf Bildungsentscheidungen und Arbeitsmarkterfolg
- Geschlechterspezifisches Lohndifferential: Eine systematische Analyse der Schätzungen für Deutschland und die Schweiz
- Lohnunterschiede zwischen Hochschulabsolvierenden mit und ohne Migrationshintergrund
- Lohnunterschiede zwischen Hochschulabsolventinnen und Hochschulabsolventen in der Schweiz
- Der Berufseinstieg von Hochschulabsolvierenden
- Helfen berufliche Erfahrungen während des Studiums beim Berufseinstieg?
- Auswirkungen der Digitalisierung auf den Schweizer Arbeitsmarkt
- Gewerkschaften im Wandel – Von der «Ersten Industriellen Revolution» zur «Industrie 4.0»
- Auswirkungen von Praktika auf den Arbeitsmarkterfolg
- The Effect of Unemployment Insurance Generosity on Young Job Seekers
- Auswirkungen der Herkunft auf Bildung und Arbeitsmarkterfolg
- Post Compulsory Educational Choices and Labor Market Outcomes in Switzerland
- Erwerbsteilnahme verheirateter Frauen in Deutschland
- The Effect of School Assessment on Student Performance
- Career Prospects of Graduates of Higher Education in Switzerland
- Gibt es einen Lohnunterschied zwischen Vollzeit- und Teilzeitarbeit?
- The Relationship between Employment Status and Health – Evidence for Germany
- The Labour Market Situation of Men and Women in Switzerland
- Die Struktur des deutschen Arbeitsmarktes im zeitlichen Wandel
- Determinants of Development in Developing Countries – An Empirical Approach
- Determinants of Youth Unemployment in Europe
- Empirical analysis of duration data: reduced form and structural approaches
- Determinants of job search success: analysis of job finding probability using constructed indices
- Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Karriere – Kann das Potential der Frauen mit Hochschulabschluss durch Teilzeitarbeit genutzt werden